

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Morningstar Marble and Granite

#### Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Morningstar Marble and Granite Goes Lean and Green with Maine MEP Assistance

##### Client Profile:

Morningstar Marble and Granite, Inc., founded in 1988, creates custom countertops, custom vanities and other natural stone products. The company employs 14 people at its facility in Topsham, Maine.

##### Situation:

Morningstar Marble and Granite's owner, Nick Whatley, had been studying Lean manufacturing and was ready to move forward with implementation. The company had begun seeing low profit margins and high overtime. They were ready to improve their manufacturing processes and customer service by reducing cycle times, increasing yields and improving quality within all product lines. Whatley contacted the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

##### Solution:

Under the guidance of Maine MEP's project manager, Jon Kirsch, Morningstar employees participated in Maine MEP's Timewise, Lean 101 which teaches the basic concepts and tools of Lean Manufacturing. From there, they did a Value Stream Map of the manufacturing process which identified that the facility layout caused excess product movement and lifting that resulted in damaged finished goods, unsafe work conditions, and excessive time spent moving and searching for materials. It also created situations where work had to stop while the product was being moved. The loading dock area was not organized causing interference with the finishing area, contamination of finished goods, safety problems (stairs, swinging pieces, and confinement while moving), and lack of storage space for supplies. Additionally, the layout of the area made it difficult to distinguish finished goods from Work in Process (WIP). By conducting a plant layout kaizen, a system of continuous improvement, the outside and the inside loading area were redesigned. Material breakage was reduced, and a new safety program was implemented, resulting in a significant amount of savings from the insurance company.

##### Results:

- \* Saved 4.25 man-hours per day.
- \* Reduced breakage by about 6 percent or \$6,000 per year.
- \* Realized a cost savings of \$11,000 per year in insurance fees.

##### Testimonial:

"The culture in the company has changed here. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and really feel like we are a cohesive team. We've also made some other adjustments that have resulted in a 27 percent reduction of our carbon footprint. It is now clear to me that had we not made these improvements by implementing the Lean techniques, we would be in serious trouble. The Maine MEP really changed us for the better."

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Nick Whatley, Owner